

THE CORRESPONDENT.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

BIBLE RECORDS.

Mr. Editor—A series of inquiries in your No. 24, of 5th January, has set me to thinking. The questions appear to be intended as leading to necessary negatives or affirmatives; but they do not in every instance fulfil the purpose. There is not one man in ten thousand who ventures to think on the theology that prevails through Christendom, and it is only among the few who think freely that the conclusions of the writer (Aristides) will in any case obtain.

Those who are habituated to think at large know very well that the books which compose the Hebrew scriptures are not the compositions, original or abridged, of one man, one language, one country, or one age; but of many men, several languages, and different countries and ages; and that, as those writings are now promulgated, they are only abridgements of other legends, and compiled from the discordant dogmas, dreams, and mystical theology of nations most opposite in their theories and doctrines.

It is impossible to prove the originality of the records of the Jews as they are received by Christians and Mahomedans. Their internal evidence, as well as evidence more absolute, prove the discordancy and inconsistency of their character.

A question asked in the second paragraph of the essay of Aristides appears to me in contradiction with itself—it is this: “If the Hebrew legends be an original record, must it not be the oldest record still existing of past times?” It must be obvious to the writer that the first question, proved affirmatively or negatively, does not infer the consequence sought. If it be shown, as it has been by some hundreds of writers, that the Jewish legends are compilations of comparatively recent manufacture, the question put is answered that it must not be the oldest record of past times; and though the productions which formed the basis of them be destroyed, and the abstracts existing be very old, or older than the period to which they have been traced, we must be first acquainted with the legends and ancient theology of other nations, before the question can be decided. The Jewish legends may be the oldest in the judgments of those who know no other, or who, knowing, deny their authenticity, and seek to build an authorotative superstructure upon the denial of those which go to divest the Jewish legends of the sanctity which it is common with all religiously educated nations to ascribe to their own peculiar notions.

To be able to judge with rational effect on the opinions of any people, it would be necessary as well to know what they say of your notions.

Examine the rationality of your own. All people educated in particular doctrines consider their own as the original, most ancient, and most pure. This is as true of modern sects of Christians and moslems, as of the Jews and pagans, as they are called. The modern sectary argues that his interpretation is the true doctrine of the primitive church, and thus a hundred sects aspire to be exclusively the only true general and original church. The pharisees and the sadducees asserted the same exclusive superexcellence. The Mahomedans have as many hundred sects as the Christians, besides the two grand divisions of *sheas* and *soonies*, who stand in about the same kind of concurrence in the theology of Mahomed, that the Calvinists and catholics hold under the common claimants to Christianity.

The learned Mahomedan avows his faith in certain of the Jewish books, and under this avowal places himself alongside of Moses; refers to the Bible to sustain polygamy, circumcision, certain other observances of cleanliness, and self denial. The zealous Christian professes to consider the Jewish books as inspired, and makes them by a general declaration his religious law; but though the Mahomedan and Christian agree in the sanctity and inspiration of the volume, the Christian disclaims polygamy and circumcision, notwithstanding the *sacred books* sanction and furnish the examples.

It is true that Mahomedan and Christian doctors assume a new inspiration, by which they affect to discard a part of what is sacred, and to rectify and put in another fashion the matters which they discard severally. Their mode of doing so, or the strange credulity and cullibility of rational beings on these topics, is truly amazing. In the common transactions of life, the humblest half lettered clown could not be imposed on in such a manner; but Mahomedans, and Jews, and Christians have been taught to massacre, enslave, and hate each other—though all professing to believe in the sanctity of the books they refer to in common.

What merits particular notice in reference to these agreements and disagreements, is that propaganda spirit which is known under the names of Bible societies and missions among the heathen. What must an Asiatic, Moslem, or Gentoo think of the zeal which spreads abroad books and examples, in which the creator is represented as giving up men, women, and children to indiscriminate slaughter and misery, as a part of the Christian inculcation by the zeal and contribution of pietists, whose missionaries teach the unlawfulness of polygamy, and peace and charity with all men. The missionaries who obtain sober, comprehending hearers have a sad task to reconcile such adverse doctrines; and whenever they have obtained earnest hearers, the Jewish books are usually discarded, and the supernatural parts of the Christian books are purged, the moral parts retained, the rest treated as incomprehensible and not consistent or practical.

In relation to the antiquity spoken of, and from which I have unintentionally strayed, I have never been so fortunate as to find any one, and I have inquired with sincerity of many, who could satisfy my understanding as to the means by which the writers of the Hebrew legends acquired such circumstantial details of the works of creation—I mean the six days' works (which some learned men further perplex, by giving to *each day*

a period in actual time equal to a *thousand years*.) How was the journal kept? by whom? was the reporter present at the days' work? and how came the Hebrew writers by the minutes? Those who wish to assert the originality and antiquity of the Hebrew books resort to inspiration! People of this description entertain most preposterous ideas of the Almighty; but they have no other means to accommodate incomprehensibility, than by reducing the God of heaven and earth to act a satire on his own works; and while omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence are his attributes, they make him act the part of an itinerant conjurer.

But I am informed by the 9th and 10th paragraphs in page 370, same article, that "the three first chapters of Genesis are translations from a fabulous Greek history, and modelled after the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus." I avow my ignorance of these Greek originals, and should be gratified by being made acquainted with their name and character in as few words as possible, or where they are to be found.

If such books exist in the Greek, as stated by Aristides, they may be compared with the more ample and more circumstantial text of the *Ezour Vedam* of the Bramins, in which may be found the first book of Genesis, word for word, only more amply detailed and more poetical.

I shall only offer a few more words on this subject. The missionaries who visit Asia resort to the denial of the antiquity of the Brahminical books; but they have not been successful: those and many other books, which carry the knowledge of literature and several sciences, particularly astronomy, beyond the epocha of the Israelites, exist; and the pious have had no other expedient left than to pronounce those ancient works to be forgeries. But these dishonest resorts are foiled by the concurrent evidence of works in other departments of literature; among others, those of music, the drama, and astronomy. It is scarcely conceivable with what wanton malignity and wrath the literature of Asia has been assailed by those pietists who labor to circulate the songs of Solomon, the meekness of Moses, and the wisdom of David!

MENU.

IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

Mr. Editor—Although Z. (in the last number of the Correspondent) has rejoined at some length to my reply to his article on the immortality of the soul, he has not settled the question to my satisfaction. I agree with him that although "some amiable and good men hold this belief, [i. e. the *disbelief* in the immortality of the soul,] and suffer no evil in consequence; yet this does not prove that their happiness might not be increased by the introduction of new ideas." But I deny that this doctrine of the soul's immortality is a *new* idea to many disbelievers; and if it were a new idea, and should lead to a belief, I am still at a loss to imagine how the mere belief could produce happiness, unless all happiness results from the anticipation of good, instead of the actual enjoyment, which I deny. I admit that a certain amount of happiness proceeds from the anticipation of benefits within the reach of human probability; but this cannot be the case with the belief of the doctrine in question.

I did not say that the system of Z. bore any analogy to lotteries: what I meant to show by my illustration was, that a belief in a future inevita-

ble good, superior to any thing that could possibly accrue to the believer previous to the period of its anticipation, would tend to relax his ordinary rational exertions, and thereby deprive him of the motives for benefiting himself and society, which he would otherwise be actuated by.

I cannot conceive why Z. should, from the existence of any belief, take "the position that no reasoning was necessary to establish it;" and thence infer that it should be "let alone." A belief must of necessity be entertained by some, to whom it is "established," and to no others; and those with whom it is not established should never "let it alone" until it is established also to them, or proved by them to be erroneous. The cause of truth will always stand the test of examination, and ever will shine more resplendant after the scrutiny: it is only that of error which will thrive by being "let alone."

Z. is surprised at me for believing in what he calls "annihilation;" but I can assure him that I have no more idea of "annihilation" than he has, and believe the word (among others, such as devil, angel, spirit, ghost, soul, &c.) to be the offspring of ignorance and superstition, and entirely devoid of rational comprehensibility. Therefore, I believe with him that nothing "in Nature ever ceases to exist," or becomes annihilated.

But, says Z., "something does exist that we all understand to be the soul: we understand it by the word *life*." This interpretation of the meaning of the word soul, in my opinion, at once destroys his argument in favor of its *immortality*; for, if the soul is the life—as life is a necessary property of matter—the soul is material, and exists not but in connection with matter, and beasts, birds, fishes, and even minerals and vegetables, (all possessing life,) have souls as well as men—none of which can be immortal. I admit that "*nothing* cannot think, and that which thinks is *something*;" but that *something* is the mind, which is a quality matter assumes under fortuitous combinations, or perhaps is a fundamental property of it. "One of the known properties of matter is divisibility;" another is mind; but it is no more necessary that the mind should possess divisibility, than that the property of divisibility should possess mind, or the thinking property.

"The parts of matter that compose the body of man (says Z.) are acted upon by the soul, *the substance that thinks*." Thus, as mind is the thinking property, and as according to Z.) the soul is the life, he makes life, mind, and soul mean one and the same thing; which to my view is a very strange amalgamation of terms. And if the soul is "*the substance that thinks*," it must necessarily be material as well as the body; and what is material cannot be immortal. Again: if the soul means either the life or the mind, it cannot be immortal; for both these properties become extinct with the decomposition of the body. Then, if the soul can neither be the life nor the mind, which I presume must be clear to every reflecting person, it is necessary first to have a precise definition of what the soul is, and what are its properties; in other words, whether it has any actual existence. Until this definition is given, all discussion about its immortality must be premature; for, though its existence "is as clear to Z. as the body," yet to me it is utterly incomprehensible. The only reasonable conclusion I can arrive at is, that "the soul and its immortality are the fictions of poets," and mean nothing of which rational beings can form any conception.

G. H. E.

IMPORTANT EXAMINATION. BY LORD BOLINGBROKE.

Continued from page 41.

Jewish Manners, under their Kings and Pontiffs.—The Jews obtain a king in spite of the priest Samuel, who does all he can to preserve his usurped authority, and he has the hardihood to say, that “to choose a king is to reject God.” (1 Sam. viii. 7.)

At length a herdsman, who sought his father’s asses, is elected king by lot. The Jews were then under the yoke of the Canaanites; they had never had a temple; their sanctuary was an ark that could be put into a cart. (1 Sam. vi. 11.)

The Canaanites had taken their ark from them, at which God was much displeased; yet he, nevertheless, suffered them to take it, but, to be revenged, he gave the piles to the conquerors, and sent mice into their fields. The victors appeased God by returning him his ark, accompanied with five golden mice. (1 Sam. vi. 4.)

No vengeance nor sacrifice could be more worthy of the Jewish god. He pardons the Canaanites, but kills fifty thousand and seventy of his own people for having looked into the ark. (1 Sam. vi. 19.)

It is under these propitious circumstances that Saul is elected king of the Jews. In their miserable country there was neither sword nor spear; the Canaanites or Philistines did not permit their Jewish slaves even to sharpen their ploughshares and axes; they were forced to apply to the Philistine laborers for this assistance; (1 Sam. xiii. 19, 20;) and yet we are told that king Saul had, at first, an army of three hundred thousand men, with whom he gained a great battle. (1 Sam. xi. 8.) Our Gulliver has similar fables, but not such contradictions.

In another battle Saul comes to terms with the pretended king Agag. The prophet Samuel arrives and asks, in the name of the Lord, “wherefore didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, to slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass?” (1 Sam. xv. 3.) And he takes a hatchet and hews king Agag in pieces. (1 Sam. xv. 33.) If such an action were true, what kind of people and priests were the Jews? Saul, who was reprov’d by the Lord because he had not himself slain king Agag, his prisoner, goes at length to fight against the Philistines, after the death of the meek prophet Samuel. He consults a witch respecting the success of the battle. It is known that witches can raise ghosts. This witch brings out of the ground the ghost of Samuel; but this merely regards the philosophy of the Jews. Now for their morality.

A player of the harp, for whom the Deity had caught a tender affection, causes himself to be anointed king during Samuel’s lifetime: he revolts against his sovereign, and, as the scripture tells us, collects four hundred wretches. “Every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him.” (1 Sam. xxii. 2.) This was a man after God’s own heart; so the first thing he does is to assassinate a farmer, named Nabal, because he refused to pay contributions. He marries Nabal’s widow, and eighteen other women, without reckoning concubines. He goes to an enemy of his own country, king Achish, who receives him well; and as a recompense for this kind reception he sacks the villages of the allies of

Achish whom he persuades that he has not meddled with any towns except such as belonged to the Hebrews. We must confess, that highway-men are less culpable in the eyes of men; but the ways of the Jewish God are not like our ways.

The good king David robs Saul's son, Ishbosheth, of his crown. He causes Mephibosheth, son of his protector, Jonathan, to be assassinated. He delivers up to the Gibeonites two sons of Saul, and five of his grandsons, to be put to death. He assassinates Uriah, to screen his adultery with Bathsheba, and yet this abominable Bathsheba was the mother of Solomon, who was an ancestor of Jesus Christ!

The remainder of the Jewish history is nothing but a tissue of consecrated crimes. Solomon begins by killing his brother Adonijah. If God granted to this Solomon the gift of wisdom, he appears to have refused him the gifts of humanity, justice, continence, and honor. He has seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. The song imputed to him is written in the style of these indecent books, which are calculated to put modesty to the blush. It is altogether about bobbies, and kisses on the mouth, a belly like a heap of wheat, voluptuous attitudes and agitations! At length he finishes by saying, "We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar." (Solomon's Song, viii. 8, 9.) Such were the manners of the wisest man among the Jews, or, at least, the manners imputed to him out of respect by miserable rabbins, and Christian divines, whose notions are still more absurd. At length, to unite an excess of ridicule with this excess of immodesty, the priests have decided, that the belly, the bobbies, and kisses of the Shulamite, are an emblem and a type of the marriage of Jesus Christ with his church!

Of all the kings of Judah and Samaria, there were very few of them who were not either assassins or assassinated, until this den of robbers, who massacred one another in the public places and the temple during the time that Titus besieged them, fell under the iron chains of the Romans, with the rest of this miserable people of God, of whom five sixths had long been dispersed over Asia, and sold in the markets of the Roman cities, each Jew being valued at the price of a pig; an animal which was certainly less impure than this nation, if it were such as its historians and prophets represent it.

No one can deny that the Jews have written these abominations; and when we thus assemble them before our eyes, our hearts revolt at them. These, then, are the heralds of Providence, the forerunners of the reign of Jesus. Sayest thou, O Abbadie, that all the Jewish history is a prediction of the church; that all the prophets have foretold Jesus? Let us, then, examine the prophets.

To be continued. 70

Tartarus.—A place in hell set apart for kings and ministers, who lord it over their subjects with an imperious, cruel, and iniquitous domination.—*Pigott.*

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LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION.

ON NATURAL PHILOSOPHY.

By Robert L. Jennings.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen—The proposition which I intend to maintain is, that the increasing study of natural philosophy will eventually destroy the Christian religion. This subject, therefore, presents itself in the following syllogism, viz. : The study of natural philosophy dispels ignorance and superstition. The Christian religion is based on ignorance and superstition : therefore, the increasing study of natural philosophy will eventually destroy the Christian religion.

By natural philosophy, Mr. Chairman, I mean, the consideration of the powers and properties of natural bodies, and their actions on one another. In proportion as these powers and properties become known, so do mankind become more intelligent, more virtuous, and more happy. It is, therefore, a duty which a man owes to himself, in common with that due to his fellow beings, to facilitate the acquirement of this knowledge by every class in society ; for, in proportion as others become intelligent and happy, happiness will be reacted on himself. I am aware that this policy would jeopardize the pecuniary interest of God's self styled servants, and others who fatten upon the ignorance, the viciousness, and the misery of mankind ; because, were all men but themselves intelligent and necessarily virtuous, "Othello's occupation would be gone." No rag-bag deacon would collect the hard earned pence of honest poverty ; no Peter's fees, nor widow's mites, would be screwed out of the pockets of the bewildered heaven seeking travellers. No, but the reverends' black silk gowns, which now stream in the wind to attract the eyes of our Broadway belles, would be converted into homespun jackets ; while their delicate jewel bedecked fingers, and cadaverous faces, would wear a more temperate, but more sunburnt look. Of a truth, however, they would be no losers, for Nature bears not to be tampered with with impunity ; and for their loss of dominion, physical ease, and *pelf*, they would possess enviable health, and serenity of mind, to which now they are generally strangers.

That natural philosophy is coeval with the existence of animated Nature, is known by the fact of every animal's natural curiosity to know the properties and uses of every thing which is presented to him, and from man's desire to know the principles upon which all his actions are performed, and those of the bodies by which his habitation is surrounded. In the infancy of human existence, man first sought the means of gratifying his natural desires ; but, gradually enlarging the sphere of his vision from himself to things around him, he fixed his lingering and wondering eyes on objects more remote ; and in the unsophisticated school of Nature began to study the properties, the influences, and the uses of the sun, moon, and stars. This, as well as his knowledge of the productions of the earth, was necessarily progressive, and forced upon him by the varie-

ty of their motions in causing day and night, and by their influence on the earth through the varied seasons; but, as these distant objects were only subject to the operation of one sense, man was easily deceived, and his imagination amply supplied the deficiency. Hence by analogy he conceived that the sky was a vast arched body of colored glass, its edges resting upon the tops of the mountains at the extreme boundary of the earth, and divided into the first, second, and third crystalline heavens. In the first, the sun and moon were placed; in the second, the planets and larger stars; and in the third heaven, (where St. Paul was carried,) the smaller stars were located; that the moon and stars were lit at night, as our lamplighters light our lamps, and the whole whirled round this earth once in twenty-four hours, for the convenience of God's most favored people here below. From that natural principle which disposes us to like that which contributes to our comfort, man at that early period began to reverence the sun, as the great source of life, and this worship has been continued under varied forms to this moment, of which the Christian religion no doubt is a remnant. At a very early period of history we find that the Chaldean, Egyptian, Hindoo, and Chinese priests had reduced natural philosophy to a science, and by their *mathematical* knowledge, which they kept from the world, predicted celestial changes that were necessarily fulfilled: hence they obtained from the uninitiated the reputation of knowing the will of the ruling destinies of man. Whether this thought was suggested by the people on discovering their skill, or whether their skill was exhibited to produce this thought on the people, is not a subject of inquiry; they advantaged themselves of it, however, and pretended that the common occurrences of life were subject to the movements of surrounding worlds; hence astrologers in all nations obtained an influence over public opinion which rendered them the desirable tools of despots, and eventually prophets and priests to the people; as it is among many of the northern nations to this day. The knowledge of the true state of the earth, and surrounding bodies, being so very limited, arose from the fact that their intercourse with others was mostly by land, for the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the *shores* of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans were the utmost boundaries of their maritime knowledge; and although Pythagoras and Ptolemy have some claims to the discovery of the true figure of this earth; though Pliny and other writers speak of a vast island stretching along the coast of Europe and Africa, of which England, the Canaries, and the Cape de Verds are but the tops of the highest mountains, yet it remained for a Galileo aided by his telescope, and a Columbus with his compass, to stamp the philosophy of the ancients in the teeth of prejudice and bigotry as unsound and false; and lead to the confirming of the Copernican system, by the voyages of Cook and Anson round the world. Some writers have given the Babylonians also the credit of discovering the true figure and motion of this earth; but this I think very improbable. The Jews had resided seventy years among the Babylonians, until they had even *forgot* their own language, and thirty-nine fortieths of those who *returned* to Jerusalem, about 460 years before the real or supposed time of Christ, were born in captivity. Then it was that the books attributed to Mr. Moses, giving an account of the fancied creation, universal deluge, &c. WERE FIRST COM-

POSED, under the inspection of Mr. Ezra, the high priest; and at least 1000 years after Mr. Moses is said to have hid himself to death. Now the account in the blessed books, which never told a lie, is very consistent with the *ancient opinions* of the Egyptians and Babylonians, but so very *contrary to facts*, that I cannot conceive that the Babylonians, the probable teachers of their prisoners the Jews, could have had very correct ideas on this subject. Hence it was that the advocates of the Christian religion incarcerated poor Galileo in a dungeon, for advancing philosophical truths which proved the reputed Mosaical account of the creation a mere fabrication, as destitute of truth as philosophically incorrect. We need not be surprised at the influence the astrologers or priests have exercised over the people in all ages, nor that the most intelligent should be deceived by their combined ignorance and craft, when we consider that the means of acquiring philosophical facts was limited to a few, that the remainder roamed in the field of imagination, and that the most common phenomena were in the hands of a few crafty and ambitious men, the means of enabling them the more easily to saddle the multitude and to ride on their backs. One or two common predictions fulfilled were sufficient to establish the reputation of a man for ever, and entitle him to be revered as one worthy to receive and communicate the divine will. An instance of this is recorded, and believe me, " 'tis true as holy writ," in 1st Kings, 18th: after a long draught, to which Africa and Asia are very subject, the astrologer Elijah ascended Mount Carmel, pretending to pray, but really to watch the clouds; and when he at last saw the black speck he descended, and with certainty predicted the torrents of rain which followed: you know the use he made of this, while, in reality, his knowledge was no more than that possessed by every seaman, particularly by those who are in the habit of doubling the Cape of Good Hope, as the cloud emphatically called the ox eye, is the never failing harbinger of very heavy rains; and even men in this country engaged in the common occupations of life, particularly farmers, when they perceive a small black cloud in the northwest, view it as the sign of an approaching thunder storm. Another instance will be found in the same chapter, for the success of which, (if there be any truth at all in the account,) the astrologer Elijah was probably indebted to the then unknown properties of lime. Few perhaps were aware in those days, that burnt limestone retains so much caloric, (or heat from the fire,) that when water is thrown on it, it disengages its caloric so rapidly as to produce combustion, if any wood or other combustible is in contact with it: their ignorance of this quality was no doubt owing to their using a mineral tar or pitch, somewhat similar to that which issues from stone coal when burning, as a cement for bricks and stone and a variety of other purposes, where we use lime. The astrologer Elijah, however, discovered or heard of this property, and turned it to his own advantage. He procured twelve prepared limestones, and with these built his altar; then placed his wood and sacrifice; the water disengaged the caloric, which fired the wood, and the sacrifice was consumed. The trick of this hoary headed monster (I beg pardon, *this man after God's own heart*) having succeeded, and knowing that his success was entirely owing to his art, he commanded the astonished multitude to seize his four hundred and fifty fellow astrologers whom

he had kept in ignorance of his discovery, to take them to the brook Kishon, and there *in cold blood* to murder them; and not to suffer one to escape!!! In all its varied forms has the knowledge of natural philosophy been made subservient to an ambitious priesthood, who alone had the time and opportunity of studying it to any advantage, until the glorious discovery of printing; then it was this giant power of priestly despotism fled the gloomy prisons of a cloister and took its seat among the civilized nations of the earth.

It is to the press, so far as it is free from priestly influence, that mankind are indebted for the knowledge which they possess of Nature and her laws; and, no longer compelled to wander in the waste of our imaginations, we fearlessly and successfully trace every effect to its respective cause: and such predictions and tricks, which were once considered prophecies and miracles, would now, by the increasing study of natural philosophy, merit the contempt of our meanest sailor, and still more ignorant hodmen. If, then, the writings on which the Christian system is founded be based on fraud and error, what can we expect of the superstructure?

Among the pious frauds which tottering error calls to support its drooping head, is using the names of intelligent men to sanction its superstitions. A tract fell into my hands the other day, which no doubt was distributed among us from the most benevolent, but mistaken, motives, hoping perchance to snatch out of this large assembly at least one brand, and save it from an eternal roasting in our heavenly father's kindly provided hell. This tract gives, as a quotation, from the celebrated lord Bacon, that "a little philosophy will make a man an atheist, but a great deal will make him a Christian." This is a gross misrepresentation, and I cannot but pity the men who, to support a bad cause, are compelled to resort to wilful misrepresentation and notorious falsehood. Lord Bacon says, that "a little philosophy inclineth men's minds to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion;" and he *also* says, that "It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely; and certainly superstition is the reproach of the Deity. Plutarch saith well to that purpose: surely, says he, I had rather a great deal men should say there was no such man at all as Plutarch, than that they should say that there was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born. Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not: but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men: therefore atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further; and we see the times which inclined to atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar) were *civil* times: but superstition hath been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new principle of motion, that ravisheth all the spheres of government. The master of superstition is the people, and in all superstition wise men follow fools, and arguments are fitted to practice in a reversed order." Would you not like to know the reason our soul saving friend did not embody all Bacon said on atheism in his tract? Well,

I'll tell you: it would not suit his purpose; and what he did select, his accustomed pen must needs misrepresent. With lord Bacon, I readily admit that depth in natural philosophy leadeth men's minds to religion; i. e. to natural religion; and hence the mythology of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and other nations. The sun, as the source of life and heat; wind, from a similarity to blowing the breath; thunder and lightning, from a slight analogy to sounds produced by men—were personified, and, aided by the fertility of men's imaginations, became objects of worship and of fear; and many of these superstitious are perpetuated even among us by ignorant, yet very pious, mothers and nurses. It was but the other day a child asked its nurse, during a thunder storm, what made that noise: the nurse replied that it was God Almighty moving his furniture; but, said the child, our furniture does not make such a noise: Oh no, said the nurse, but his furniture is so much larger than ours. But natural philosophy teaches us, who are freed from the shackles of superstition, that these are unconscious agents of good and ill, and therefore neither merit our respect, nor awaken our fears; but 'tis far otherwise with those who are yet under the dominion of the priests, whose interest being to retain their influence over the human mind, spare no pains to impress their hearers that it is heresy to believe any thing contrary to the letter of their Bible. Hence every child found walking in the street is hurried to a Sunday school to have his mind polluted with folly and fanaticism, and hence the Sunday school premiums to *buy* the little ragged urchins to the love of the Bible god, and all the calendar of saints, prophets, and apostles; and hence the missionary societies, Bible societies, mite societies, tract societies, rag bag societies, and a host of other societies, to fleece the pockets of the too credulous Christians, and to further the cause of error, fraud, and deception.

To be continued.

Robert Taylor.—We had been led to believe that this gentleman, after his conviction on a ridiculous charge of *blasphemy*, in the court of King's Bench, London, had been sentenced to two years imprisonment, and a heavy fine. We perceive, however, by London papers to the 7th December, that the defendant was then at large. He had attended several days in the court to receive judgment; but was at last told by the judge before whom the cause was tried, "that he would not be called up at present, but that his recognizances would remain in force in case the *prosecutors* should determine to move for the judgment of the court."

We know well from experience who are the "prosecutors" here alluded to. They are the *priesthood*, who have instigated all the prosecutions against liberal principles, and who, if public opinion was not against them in England, would react the same bloody tragedies which their ghostly predecessors had exhibited in Smithfield. Nor is it from *lenity* they have not called for judgment on Mr. Taylor, but because they know that prosecutions of the nature instituted against him have become highly unpopular; and popularity is what the clergy, above all other men, are the most desirous of obtaining. They have also evidently calculated, in the present instance, that by holding the defendant to bail, this will re-

strain him from repeating the supposed offence. This may be good policy on their part; but, if we have formed a correct estimate of the character of Mr. Taylor, we are inclined to think he will not be induced to abandon his purpose by this priestly manœuvre. At all events, nothing, even *in terrorum*, though sanctioned by a conclave of all the priests of all the religions in the universe, can arrest the progress of liberal principles. The truth, like a mighty torrent, is advancing with an impetus which nothing can restrain until superstition is effectually prostrated.

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Mr. Owen.—It is already known by the public papers, that Mr. Robert Owen, contrary to the invidious prognostications of the superstitionists, has arrived in the United States, and was delivering lectures on the Social System, in the American Theatre, New Orleans, in the end of last month. Previous to the lectures, Mr. Owen published the following Address, which we lay with pleasure before our readers:

To those who desire to improve the condition of the Population in all Nations upon rational principles.

In what manner shall I address you upon matters entirely new to the public, yet of the highest importance to every human being? My wish is, to benefit you and your posterity to a greater extent than I can yet venture to explain to you. I hope, indeed, to assist you to remove ultimately all the evils which men have hitherto endured.

To effect this change, beneficially for the present generation, I must offend against the strongest prejudices of all nations. I must at once openly and most decidedly oppose notions and opinions heretofore deemed by each of them sacred truths, and must set myself in opposition to almost all their present practices. To benefit my fellow men and to secure to them the most lasting services, it is unavoidable that I must for a time arouse against me the popular prejudices of all people. It will be however greatly for the benefit of every individual, in all countries, that these feelings should now be called forth, that the errors which produce them may be made manifest, overcome, and removed.

I would avoid this course and not create this temporary excitement if I could, and yet effect the object. I would greatly prefer during the whole of my life to reciprocate kindness with all my fellow men, rather than to imitate their feelings by opposing their old established notions and habits; the one course would produce a life of ease, comfort, and pleasure, while the other is likely to lead to a long contention, and to every thing that can be personally hazardous.

But to decline this task with the impressions which have been made almost from childhood on my mind, I feel would be a dereliction of the highest duty which any individual has ever yet had to perform. I commence it, therefore, and whatever I may say or do, in the performance of this great work, I now once for all simply state, that my intention is to benefit my fellow men without any other motive than the discharge of a duty which appears to me beyond all comparison paramount to every other consideration.

I have been prepared for this task by an early study of human nature, under all the various circumstances in which it has yet existed according

to the history of all nations; by personal intercourse with the leading minds of modern times, and by long continued varied and extensive practical experiments in some of the most civilized countries in both hemispheres. I have prepared a course of lectures by which to make the result of these proceedings known to the world. These lectures I intend to deliver in the chief cities and towns in the United States, and in Great Britain and Ireland, that the principles which they advocate may be generally known, severely scrutinized, and fairly discussed, in order that, if they shall be found true, they may be adopted, in practice, without delay, thus giving to those who now live some of their benefits; or if they should not be found to be in strict accordance with *every fact* which man knows, that they may be thus proved, and in the most public manner acknowledged to be an error. This will be at once to do justice to the principles and to mankind. For if they are as beneficial as to me they appear to be, the good which they will effect will soon commence; while if there be evil in them, that evil will be as speedily brought to a termination.

It may be proper here to state my conviction that man was born ignorant of his nature: that he has continued in ignorance of it, and that he has erred in all his conduct. That he has continually acted in opposition to the fixed laws of his nature, and thereby created evil. That he has been incompetent to distinguish vice from virtue and to discover the causes which produce both. That in consequence of this ignorance, every kind of confusion has been introduced into human society, until it has become so complex, contradictory, and irrational that it can no longer proceed without "something being done," to remedy its daily increasing evils, or in other words, without an entire reorganization over the world, founded on a correct knowledge of our nature and of its fixed laws, which laws can alone determine real virtue and vice.

I propose then that the governments, and the most enlightened, scientific and practical men of all countries, shall be invited to put an end for ever to war and to all individual and national rivalry, and to reorganize society in every country, upon the principle for forming arrangements in strict accordance with our nature.

It will be discovered that those arrangements may now be so formed, that, most advantageously for all, every human being may, not only without contest of any kind, but in harmony with all the best feelings of our nature, be secured in the possession, at all times, of a full supply of the best of every thing the earth can afford. To prove the truth of these statements and to effect these important results is the object of the lectures which I propose to deliver.

I have already expended more than five hundred thousand dollars and devoted upwards of forty years in making preparations for this great work. The task is now to be accomplished: if I succeed, the benefit will be for all mankind to the latest posterity; if I fail, the loss is to be mine.

I do not, however, state this expenditure of time and money with a view to claim the slightest degree of merit of any description; on the contrary, I am as much convinced as I can be of any truth, that I am not, for any thing I have done, or may do, entitled to any merit what-

ever; for I am well assured that if the magnitude and importance of the object had appeared to others as they do to me, there is not a human being who would not willingly and with pleasure make similar, or, if they had the means, much greater, sacrifices.

I have now but one request to make to the population of all countries: it is that they will endeavor to attend to this subject with a sincere desire to discover truth from error, discuss every part of it with kind feelings, and after a calm and patient investigation of *all* its principles and their practical results, that they will openly and fairly avow their opinions upon the subject.

New Orleans, Jan. 18, 1828.

ROBERT OWEN.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Fiery Ordeal.—The power of resisting the action of heat has been claimed or possessed by individuals in all ages. At first it was supposed to be miraculous, and owing to the immediate interposition of the Deity. It has even been admitted, in courts of justice, as a conclusive proof of guilt on some occasions, and of innocence or superior sanctity in others. An exceedingly minute and interesting account of the fire ordeal of the Hindoos was given in the Asiatic Researches by the celebrated governor Hastings; and in the Antigone of Sophocles, the guards accused of neglect by Creon, to prove their innocence, offered to handle hot iron or walk through fire. Virgil tells us, that the priests of Apollo, who attended the temple on Mount Soraete, had the faculty of walking with naked feet over burning coals, and Varro affirms, that they were rendered insusceptible of the effects of fire only by means of a composition. The priests of the temple of the goddess Feronia were not less dexterous; and Strabo says that this drew every year a great number of curious people to visit and enrich the temple. The city of Thyane had a temple dedicated to Diana Persica, whose priestesses could also tread with impunity on the hottest coals. In more modern times, Spain had its *Saludadores* or *Santiguadores*, who were nothing but impostors, pretending that they were descended from St. Catherine. To prove their illustrious origin, they showed on their body the impression of a wheel, called themselves incombustible, and managed fire with great address. Leonard Vair reports, that one of them having been in good earnest shut up in too hot an oven, was found burnt to a cinder when it was opened.

The trial by fiery ordeal, which, for a long time, the criminal jurisprudence of Europe tolerated, to those who did not carry arms as a mode of appealing to God, was performed in various ways. The first, which was used by the nobles, priests, and other free persons, was the trial by red hot iron. It consisted in carrying a bar of iron about three pounds in weight, heated to a greater or less degree, according to the nature of the accusation, and to a greater or less distance, according to the sentence; or in putting the hand into a red hot gauntlet, or in walking over hot iron bars or ploughshares, from nine to twelve in number.

The earliest instance of fire ordeal in Christendom occurred in the fourth century. Simplicius, bishop of Autun, had married before his

promotion, and his wife, unwilling to quit him after his promotion, continued to live with him. The sanctity of Simplicius suffered by the constancy of his wife's affection, and it was rumoured that the bishop persisted in opposition to the ecclesiastical canons to taste of the sweets of matrimony; upon which his wife, in the presence of a great concourse of people, took up a considerable quantity of burning coals, which she held in her clothes, and applied to her breasts, without the least hurt to her person or her garments, as the legend says, and her example being followed by her husband, with the like success, the multitude admired the miracle, and proclaimed the innocence of the loving pair. A similar trick, as Mosheim terms it, was played by St. Brice in the fifth century.

The empress Maria of Arragon, wife of Otho III., had accused a young Italian count of having endeavored to seduce her, and he was put to death; but his widow, with the head of her husband in her hand, demanded to be admitted to the fiery ordeal in order to prove his innocence, and holding, as long as was thought necessary, a red hot bar of iron without being burnt, this miracle was admitted as proof, and the empress was condemned to be burnt alive.

Another form of trial, attended with greater ceremony, was that undergone by Luitprand, a Milanese priest, who, in 1103, offered to prove the truth of an accusation against his bishop, by walking through a blazing pile of wood. He entered, it is said, through volumes of flame, which divided before him, and came out amid the acclamations of the people. It was remarked, however, that his hand had received some injury from the fire when throwing holy water and incense into the pile, and that his foot was bruised. However, this proof was thought insufficient by the pope, who acquitted the archbishop. In truth, says Duclos, who has inserted an able essay on Trial by Duel and the Elements, in the fifteenth volume of the *Memoirs of the Academie Royale des Inscriptions*, if we consider the whole story, diminish the size and brightness of the pile, and increase the injury done to the hand and foot, and regard the sentence of the pope as directed against a fanatic, the wonder of this pretended miracle will cease. Aldobrandini, a Florentine monk, in the eleventh century, also walked through the fire, to prove an accusation against his bishop, and hence got the name of *Petrus Igneus*.

In the time of the ridiculous quarrel between the Dominicans and Franciscans, one of the former proposed to prove the sanctity of Jerome Savonarola, by walking through a blazing fire, and a cordelier made the same offer to prove the contrary, but at the sight of the flames they both ran off. George Logothetus also tells us of a man who refused to submit to the fiery ordeal, saying, he was no charlatan, and when the archbishop pressed him, he sagaciously replied, that he would have no objection to take the burning bar, provided he received it from the hands of his eminence. As the minds of men became more enlightened, the miracle of the resistance of fire was disputed, and it was referred either to imposition or natural causes.

Religious Principles of Fot.—He that forsaketh his father and mother, says Fot, to follow me, shall become a perfect Samanean, or heavenly being.

He that keepeth my precepts to the fourth degree of perfection, shall acquire the power of flying in the air, of moving earth and heaven, of protracting or shortening life, and of rising again.

The Samanean looks with contempt on riches, and makes use only of such things as are strictly necessary. He mortifies the flesh, subdues his passions, fixes his desires and affections on nothing terrestrial, meditates without ceasing upon my doctrine, endures injuries with patience, and bears no enmity against his neighbor.

Heaven and earth shall pass away ; despise therefore your bodies which are composed of the four perishable elements, and think only of your immortal souls.

Hearken not to the suggestions of the flesh ; fear and sorrow are the produce of the passions ; stifle the passions, and fear and sorrow will thus be destroyed.

Whosoever dies without having received my doctrine, becomes again and again an inhabitant of the earth, till he shall have embraced it.

Tear.—A crystal drop of water, which at once involuntarily starts in the eye of the philosopher, upon the bare mention of the word king, or priest ! I declare to God, I almost wish that I possessed the gloomy eloquence of Hegestpous, that mankind, by that sad alternative, might be forever relieved from those scourges of the human race !—*Pigott.*

Free Press Association.—A scientific lecture will be delivered, in the Temple of Arts, on Sunday (tomorrow) the 17th instant, at 11 o'clock forenoon. The *theological* lectures will be continued in the afternoon, at half past 2 o'clock.

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